Nikki Craft's Aesthetic Feminist Activism

(English Version — AI-Translated from the Original Portuguese)

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[Add graphics.]

Abstract

One of the conditions for misogynistic gender norms to become established in society is the existence of a compulsive, dominant, and universalist heterosexual cultural production, which establishes clearly differentiated principles for the representation of the sexes — principles that tend to favor men, to the detriment of women. We hold that cultural production gives rise to processes of reproduction, meaning that, in practical terms, the representation of signs, codes, values, and behaviors associated with the sexes becomes potentially materialized in societies by both men and women. This has been a battle taken up by many women since the second wave of the feminist movement, particularly by its most radical wing, which has sought to reclaim new paradigms regarding the cultural conventions of gender. In this study, we propose to analyze some of the campaigns carried out by Nikki Craft, a radical North American feminist who, in the 1970s and 1980s, organized and/or led numerous protests in public spaces across several American cities. This analysis aims to clarify the motivations and strategies employed by this feminist, whose activism targeted several cultural structures — the art world, beauty institutions, and the pornography industry — that legitimize representations harmful to women.

Keywords: Nikki Craft; Activism; Radical Feminism; Representations; Culture; Gender.

Influences on Nikki Craft's Activism

Born in 1949 in the United States, in Santa Cruz, California, Nikki Craft would go on, from the 1970s onward, to play a significant role in second-wave feminist campaigns. She belonged to a generation in which women's educational advancement was beginning to provide sufficient momentum to claim a broad range of rights — familial, occupational, reproductive. Committed to a paradigm shift in cultural representation and a fighter against gender-based violence and inequality, Nikki Craft would become one of many feminists who rejected the universalizing discourse about women, breaking with the "essentialism" of which first-wave feminists had been accused. While those earlier feminists celebrated female sexuality by exposing their own nude bodies, inserting themselves into patriarchal power structures, activist Nikki Craft would seek, in many of her campaigns, to destroy the aesthetic feminine pleasure that satisfied men, rejecting femininity and the objectification of women's bodies.

From 1945 to 1973, the media played a fundamental role in cementing new dominant ideologies through the implementation of new consumer habits — habits that would mark a new era in the processes of identity culturalization. In mass cultural representations of gender, women tended to appear as the weaker sex, in need of protection from those who established the norms — men — to whom women were expected to submit. The interviews conducted in Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique (1963) are among the studies from that period revealing that the hegemonic cultural precepts of the time were unfavorable to women's reproductive processes. The symbolic violence that relegated the female sex to a dominated status was not accepted by many women, who, becoming aware of the mechanisms of male domination, sought to free themselves from the constraints that prevented the exercise of their right to individual freedom. Earlier, Simone de Beauvoir had served as one of the touchstones for the second-wave feminist movement, when she sought to demonstrate that being a woman does not depend solely on biological variables, because being a woman is to be culturally constructed, from the standpoint of masculine norms — which relegates her to being The Second Sex (1949).

> The same Betty Friedan would go on, in 1966, to found and chair the National Organization for Women (NOW), a broad organization for the defense of women's rights (Manuel Castells, 2003).

Alongside a postmodernized culture, May 1968 was another turning point that encouraged many women in the United States, including Nikki Craft, to become activists and join advocacy groups. As there was no single type but many types of advocacy, fragmentation would occur, even within some communities, as groups organized around shared interests and ideological compatibility. One of the currents Nikki Craft would come to join was radical feminism. Strongly influenced by lesbian feminists, radical feminism, like cultural feminism, is described by Castells as a source of dedicated activism, rich in cultural creativity and theoretical innovation, which challenged the movement itself to confront its own internal prejudices regarding sexuality, while also carrying decisive weight in shaking historically patriarchal structures.

> Some of her actions extend beyond feminist causes. Craft's activism also includes actions on the environment, U.S. foreign policy, war, and social injustice.

Another factor that influenced Nikki Craft's becoming a feminist was her mother, Evelyn Craft, who belonged to a women's liberation group that, among its demands, called for changes in how advertising represented women. It was the Redstockings who would drive radical feminism in New York, publishing in their manifesto: “We identify men as the agents of our oppression. Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. All other forms of exploitation and oppression (racism, capitalism, imperialism, etc.) are extensions of male supremacy: men dominate women, a few men dominate the rest.” The same name, Redstockings, would later be adopted, in 1969, by a feminist magazine — the same magazine Nikki's mother would leave on the kitchen table at breakfast for her daughter to read before school. In this direct way, Evelyn Craft left her daughter a legacy of political position and perspective.

In the late 1960s, Nikki Craft attended the first demonstrations supporting the legalization of abortion in Austin, Texas. During that period, Craft attended her first conference on rape and, for the first time, understood the political meaning and social ramifications of rape — of which she herself, among many other women, had also been a victim. She gradually became involved in and part of feminist movements in Santa Cruz, California, taking on leadership roles within community activities. She worked for five years in California, then spent another five years traveling the country with many women, engaging in acts of civil disobedience and protest — which, beyond their positive effects for the cause, resulted in over a hundred arrests. From the mid-1970s onward, Craft, among

other causes, protested against visions of femininity that potentially promoted sexism, against beauty pageants that promoted racism and discrimination, and against the pornography industry.

Campaigns Against Rape

Already established as a feminist in the 1970s, Nikki Craft founded Women Armed for Self Protection (WASP) in 1975, an organization aimed at giving women self-defense mechanisms — but also mechanisms of retaliation against rapists. WASP also sought to change Texas law so that, in addition to white citizens, Black citizens and women would be permitted to own firearms. The group's founding purpose was to push for new laws and new attitudes toward sexuality in order to bring about consequent shifts in the culture. It was a gathering group that allowed many women, survivors of rape, to share their individual experiences.

> *Hundreds of women crossed the country to share their individual experiences of rape. We were stunned, because one woman after another came to the microphone to share similar events. "When I was 15 a man held a knife to my throat [...] when I was 13 my father [...] when I was 12 I was walking through the park and three men [...] when I was 4 a family friend [...] after being married a year my husband [...]" — Nikki Craft, 1974*

In 1977, Nikki Craft would co-found the Kitty Genovese Women's Project, a project that would give rise to a series of conflicts between activist women and rapists. Craft's initial idea had been to produce a pamphlet on rape. A year later, on March 8 (International Women's Day), the pamphlet had grown into a 20-page newspaper containing articles, personal accounts of rape, and, notably, the names of every man in Dallas County who had committed a sex offense between 1960 and 1976. The list contained more than 2,100 men, 341 of whom accounted for multiple offenses. Nevertheless, "most of them were walking the streets again, and many of them would rape again." Authorities at the time estimated that around 75% of rapes went unreported. Of the 3,562 rapes recorded in Chicago in 1972, only 833 men were arrested; of those, 204 were indicted, 23 went to trial, and 8 were convicted. The gap between the efforts made toward holding offenders accountable and the actual number of convictions was a source of real frustration.

For many feminists, including Nikki Craft, rape and other forms of violence against women are practices that result from mechanisms of cultural reproduction carried out by men. Diana Russell argues in her article "Against Pornography: The Evidence of Harm" (1999) that pornography holds fundamental importance because it relentlessly represents diverse forms of violence against women, embedding them within popular forms of entertainment for men. It is precisely this character of entertainment, of male sexual gratification, and ultimately of impunity, that legitimizes forms of sexual relationship in which women are abused and degraded. But violence and degradation in the representation of women are not exclusive to the pornography industry. Our next object of analysis is a protest by Nikki Craft against a work of art.

Protest Against Objectification and Violence in the Representation of Women's Bodies in Art

On March 31, 1980, Nikki Craft entered the Special Collections Library at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC), which she attended, and came upon an exhibit titled The Incredible Case of the Stack O'Wheats Murders, by artist Leslie Krims. The exhibit consisted of ten photographs, each printed in sepia tones, showing a woman nude from the waist down, or fully nude, lying in what appeared to be her own blood. The images created the impression that the woman had

been wounded or stabbed to death. The series was described by its promoters as a “humorous” exhibit, since it allegedly depicted so-called signature murders — killings in which the perpetrator deliberately marks the crime as his own, for instance through a characteristic mutilation of the victim or a particular object routinely left at the scene. Each photograph shows a woman, apparently dead, nude or partially nude. The pamphlet accompanying the exhibit included the following statement: “The poses reveal far less about struggle and surrender than about provocation and sensuality.”

Read Nikki Craft's own testimony about her action against Krims's work:

> *Today, March 31, 1980, I destroyed the ‘Stack O'Wheat’ prints, tearing them up and pouring chocolate syrup over them. I destroyed these prints, hateful toward women, in the name of all women who have to live moment to moment with the awareness that they might become the next statistic, the next police file; for all women who have to live their lives constantly on guard, as if in a war zone. I destroy these prints in the name of Barbara Schwartz, who this month, in the middle of the afternoon, was stabbed to death on Mount Tamalpais — she would not have been safe enough walking her dog, going about her own life. I take responsibility for this artistic expression [...] I made a commitment to carry out this action with the understanding that destroying violent pornography will not, by itself, resolve how men think and feel about us, but that direct actions like this one will affect how we think and feel about ourselves; and with the understanding that our lives remain committed to refusing to collaborate in our own degradation. — Nikki Craft, 1980*

Whether or not it was a conscious act, what Leslie Krims did in his work was perpetuate a type of representation that male artists routinely make of women's bodies. Krims depicts the woman (as victim) without bruises, which creates the impression that there had been no sign of struggle, and according to culturally predetermined standards of beauty shaped by male taste — only young women with slender bodies appear in the artist's work. De Clarke interprets the piece as a humorous invitation for men to reproduce it in reality. In one of the images, a Coca-Cola bottle appears between the model's legs, creating the illusion of rape, either before or after her death. Buyers of one of the photographs would receive a complimentary jar of pancake syrup.

The critic, for his part, defended his position and his choice: “Of course, in this series the humor lies in the Hershey's chocolate used [...] the choice of model, her poses, the choice of Coca-Cola bottles, peeled bananas, etc., appear as advertising icons that make it difficult to see the images as violent pornography [...] The viewer notices that the ‘blood’ is not there to hide the harmonious lines of the body — on the contrary, it lends it beauty.”

> *I looked at them [the images] and could not get them out of my head, because of the malicious sexual violence combined with the entertainment message; also because of the manipulative, pamphlet-like writing by an art historian who, in the name of exalting art, used the murder of a woman as academic entertainment — I had to do something about the photos. I planned the action against them for a long time, spent a great deal of money, and risked my education to do it.*

Nikki Craft and many other women at UCSC saw the intervention against Stack O'Wheats not as an attack on Leslie Krims or the library, but as a defense of women against the violence depicted in the photographs. Perhaps because her intentions were understood by the broader university community, she would later be cleared of all charges and nominated — by a large group of students and staff, including the university's director and the officer who had arrested her — for an award called

“Outstanding Contribution to Campus Understanding of Ethical Principles,” an award that, that year, would ultimately go unpresented.

The objectification of women's bodies has long been one of feminism's protest banners against cultural representations of femininity in the media and in art history. In Ways of Seeing (1972), John Berger observes that in both art and advertising “men act and women appear” — that is, there has been a tendency for men to be the active agents and women the more passive ones.

Art history has itself contributed to structuring hierarchical positions that tend to favor men. One of countless examples from modern art is the paintings Yves Klein made using his nude models (Anthropometries), which, according to the artist, were intended to create a “sensual environment that stabilized [his] microcosm.” In the process of making this pictorial work, models were used as living paintbrushes: they were coated in paint and then dragged across the canvas. They performed in staged productions with a conductor, orchestra, and choir, a live spectacle before an audience, steeped in an aura of lascivious entertainment. One notable performance took place at the luxurious International Gallery of Contemporary Art on Rue Saint-Honoré, an event exclusive to one hundred guests, including artists and critics, though most of the audience consisted of gallery owners.

The stated intent, as Klein himself explained, was the “rejection of the tradition of figurative painting.” And yet the artist never departed from the tendency to choose models for their traditionally feminine, curvaceous, sensual bodies, relentlessly seeking provocation, undressed to please the male gaze. The sexual factor was very much in play, and throughout the process Klein appeared elegantly dressed as the artist/producer/director — the one giving orders, maintaining control over the action, showing his models where and how to position their bodies.

These two celebrated works of art serve as examples of how the art system — in its processes of production/representation and its mechanisms of legitimation/canonization — constitutes a replica of “the unequal relations already entrenched in Western culture.” This inequality is not unique to the representation of femininity and masculinity in art history. Linda Nochlin's question — “Why have there been no great women artists?” — presupposes institutional factors, rules governing the game, that have prevented “talented” women from achieving the visibility men have long achieved. As Griselda Pollock and Roszika Parker pointed out, the words “mastery” and “masterpiece,” both within and outside the art world, are perceived as adjectives attesting to the nature of (male) genius. In concrete terms, according to Roberta Smith (of The New York Times), “60% of art students are women, 15% exhibit in galleries, and 4% of what's in MOMA is by women.” The bind tightens further for feminist artists seeking to exhibit their work in art institutions. Helena Reckitt, a feminist and curator of contemporary art, highlights this in her study “Who Wants to Be a Feminist Artist?”: the difficulty feminists face in exhibiting and selling their work. Even when invited to exhibit, there remains a tendency within the art world to restrict feminist artistic content. As a result, out of fear of jeopardizing their careers, many young feminist artists may feel pushed toward irreverence and a “cool” attitude rather than genuinely encouraged toward theoretical-practical investigation tied to gender issues.

Protests Against the Standardization of Female Beauty

Contemporary feminist debates on essentialism have come to frame the institutionalization of feminine identity as a structure of male oppression serving heterosexual reproductive ends. A heterosexual system presupposes organizing cultural gender values into two opposing, asymmetrical categories (masculine and feminine) and converting those categories into regulators of identity and sexuality. Judith Butler, in Gender Trouble, refers to these two categories as a “cultural matrix,”

through which gender identities are regulated. For Butler, gender relates to culture the way sex relates to nature. In other words, gender is not a causal result of sex but rather a cultural construction imposed upon sex — which ultimately makes sex not a natural category but a politically and socially regulated category, shaped by representation. Butler discusses the normative functions of the "heterosexual compulsion of representations," which serve to fix sexuality within discourses and terms of power in service of phallic conventions. Baudrillard, for his part, treats sexual categories as a regulatory production of the political economy. For Baudrillard, the cultural woman is a product sold to the biological woman: hygiene, perfume, cosmetics, general behavioral traits — the entire packaging of "woman" amounts to a system of signs constituting the feminine model, whose counterpart is consumption.

In "The Mark of Gender," Monique Wittig describes language as a set of acts that, through constant repetition, produce effects in reality to the point that sexual categories come to be treated as unquestionable facts. For Wittig, language has the power to create "social reality" and to establish (oppressive) categories, presenting them as natural facts. It was against this exercise of oppression through gender representations — representations that operate through processes of reproduction and turn gender values into absolute truths — that feminist Nikki Craft sought to push back in her campaigns against beauty pageants. All of Nikki Craft's activism concerning gender representation, particularly against beauty pageants, is work that takes an authoritative stance aimed at toppling the phallocentric heterosexual system. In 1982, the Santa Cruz beauty pageant was targeted by protesters, using as a centerpiece the work But Is It Art or Is It Politics? The piece consists of a 60-centimeter ceramic globe, with red and white stripes painted over the continents, surrounded by ocean blue; atop the globe are five replica penises waving American flags. Around the globe were placed 150 Barbie dolls of different races, wearing different outfits but all posed identically and sharing the same features as the white Barbie.

The piece was placed in the parking lot of the Dream Inn hotel in Santa Cruz, on the same day the judges, contestants, and public arrived for the Miss California beauty pageant. Facing the Miss California contestants and their supporters (audience and sponsors), the piece pushed toward a reading of standardized beauty, attacking its sanctification and framing it as a myth, a con, through which women are exploited so that certain men can profit. Myth California highlighted the sexism and artificiality of women aspiring to reproduce Barbie's values, in which the display of beauty is the supreme value to be reproduced.

[Caption, Figure 6]: In another Myth California protest, Nikki Craft vomits Kellogg's cereal and Crunch chocolate bars (the pageant's sponsors) during a piece of street theater. It was a way of drawing attention to "Weight Slavery" and public health issues related to bulimia and eating disorders.

Campaigns Against the Pornography Industry

> *Hustler has been destroying women for far too long; now it's time for women to destroy Hustler. — Nikki Craft, quoted in Irene Moosen, 1992, p. 2*

Pornography has generated a battleground of debate, including within the feminist movement itself. Beginning in the 1970s, pro-pornography feminists began producing their own material, breaking from hegemonic pornographic narratives — for example, through depictions of sexual pleasure more centered on women, sometimes grounded in feminist theory. For radical feminists like Nikki Craft, the pornography industry has been the target of an unending battle. The radical wing's core argument is that most women subjected to beating, torture, or assault in pornography are not engaged in

simulation. Even where simulation is involved, radical feminists argue that much of the sexual violence men commit against women results from the reproduction of behaviors tied to sexuality — negative behaviors transmitted through pornography. Acts that are legally punishable, such as physical or psychological violence, harassment, child abuse, and beating, become, once eroticized in pornography, mechanisms associated with pleasure. That is, by eroticizing these acts, pornography conveys the idea that they are exciting — thereby validating them and rendering them socially acceptable. And because men and women are socially constructed, the production of these behaviors can, within heterosexual relationships, give rise to the reproduction of "misogyny-based messages," which may legitimize stripping women of human characteristics and promoting them as a "thing" that must submit to male power and domination.

> "I believe men rape women because they don't see us as human, but as objects. Women have to deal with the images society constructs of us as we walk down the street. Hugh Hefner and Larry Flynt get to stay safe in their mansions with bodyguards driving them everywhere. We're not so lucky; we have to go to the bus stop at night and deal with men who don't look at us as human beings." (Craft, 1984a)

Nikki Craft was among the feminists who retaliated against the publication of violent pornography. In 1981, she organized a mobilization of citizens in a Los Angeles community to form the Preying Mantis Women's Brigade, so that, together, they could devise ways of taking action against the industry. Preying Mantis designed and used a piece called The Porn Machine, sharpening the confrontational character of a press conference held at Hustler's headquarters in Los Angeles. The Porn Machine consisted of a black box displaying images from Hustler magazine. Atop the piece, beneath an American flag, were pasted cut-out images of sexually brutalized women alongside cartoons caricaturing the Hillside Strangler. The impact of the piece, and the satirical dialogue read aloud to the crowd, led many women to tear up copies of the magazine; others expressed their outrage by throwing eggs or smearing the magazines with chocolate syrup.

> The media's name for the two men (cousins), Kenneth Bianchi and Angelo Buono, convicted of kidnapping, raping, torturing, and killing women aged 12 to 28 between 1977 and 1978.

The destruction of Hustler magazines was even covered on television, with organizers hoping to spread the message and pressure vendors to stop carrying it. The Preying Mantis Women's Brigade and its active supporters claimed responsibility, in 1981, for the destruction of more than 550 copies of Hustler in the Santa Cruz area. Men and women worked individually and in groups, using various boycott techniques — bottles of India ink, varnish, motor oil, red paint, and toothpaste squirted onto copies. Other protesters preferred to "accidentally" spill coffee and Coca-Cola on the magazines.

> *We are calling for corporate accountability. Car manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies have to prove their products are safe before they're released to market; we're asking Larry Flynt to prove his publications don't lead to acts of violence.*

The central reason this action mobilized so many people was Hustler's coverage of the murder of 20-year-old Cindy Lee Hudspeth, a victim of Hillside Strangler Kenneth Bianchi. Hustler described Cindy Lee's murder as Bianchi's "latest achievement," adding the remark that "you have to be hard on them. After knocking off a few skanks, the Hillside Strangler likes to lie back and relax with a Dewar's Lite Label (whisky)." Alongside these messages, apparently meant to entertain and encourage a male audience, the same issue featured nude women, bound and tortured. Hustler provoked a triple protest from activists: against the physical and psychological violence inflicted on women, against the encouragement of deviant male behavior toward women, and against Larry Flynt's profiting from both.

[Caption, Figure 9, on the Hustler cover]: Feminists have long protested that women in pornography are treated as "pieces of meat." This Hustler cover appears to make a concession to feminists through Larry Flynt's statement that "women will no longer be used as pieces of meat" — a claim undercut by the meat grinder itself, which perpetuates meanings of violence and cruelty that contradict the irony of the message.

The campaigns against Hustler continued. In 1984, the Preying Mantis Women's Brigade collective, under Nikki Craft's direction, organized The Mush Award in Santa Cruz, California, where Ann Simonton, dressed as a pimp, held a 38-centimeter phallus that ejaculated cream of wheat onto pornography as she read it aloud to customers entering the store. The award was given to stores that had broken their agreement with the Preying Mantis Women's Brigade collective. Because some of these stores were discovered secretly selling Hustler to certain customers, the activist collective would award them "The Mush" once again. This action led 28 stores in the Santa Cruz area to agree to stop selling the pornographic magazine.

Pornography doesn't burn itself; it needs your help.

In December 1984, Penthouse published an issue containing nine images of Asian women bound with thick ropes around their ankles, wrists, vaginal lips, and buttocks. Two of the images showed women, blindfolded, hanging from trees, heads slumped forward, apparently dead. An older woman, cooperating with the camera, places her hands on the shoulders of one of the younger women, appearing to push her toward the viewer. Two other women were photographed lying face-down, appearing inanimate, exposed genitals, completely defenseless, with no possibility of resisting any form of abuse. In yet another image, a woman with her face painted white, a rope around her neck and chest, stares into the camera positioned above her on a cliff…

This publication sparked a wave of organized protests, which activists called the National Rampage Against Penthouse. Civil disobedience was one of the primary strategies used, including guerrilla theater, boycotts, and direct corporate confrontation. The collective's goal was to organize public education actions to draw attention to the exploitative aspects of pornography and how the industry can promote violence against women and children. Though led by two women, the Rampage could not have operated without the intense commitment of feminist activists across numerous communities throughout the United States, who not only participated in the actions themselves but also maintained media contacts to spread word of their intentions, encourage public debate, and, in turn, recruit more activists to the movement.

> National Rampage Against Penthouse was a movement founded in 1983 by Nikki Craft and Melissa Farley. Together, they organized protests against Penthouse, specifically targeting its Asian-themed pornography. Some of these protests resulted in hundreds of arrests (Farley, 1991).

In February 1985, two months after the Penthouse issue featuring bound and violated Asian women, Jean Kar-Har Fewel, an orphaned Chinese girl who had been raped and killed, was found tied to a tree with rope around her neck. This crime prompted further campaigns by the National Rampage Against Penthouse, some of which included acts of civil disobedience in which pornographic magazines were torn apart.

Although the organization maintained that it had nothing against sexual relationships or nudism, these acts of protest led some liberal, pro-pornography organizations and much of the media, years later, to associate the National Rampage Against Penthouse with right-wing fundamentalist principles. On the other side, feminist survivors of incest who used their own testimony for direct educational purposes continued to insist on how much the pornography industry could contribute to the reproduction of behaviors derived from sadomasochistic sexual representations — and that

Penthouse, in particular, should be held accountable for many of its publications, for encouraging improper conduct.

Through the Rampage, Nikki Craft wrote articles, spoke to the press, raised money, gave lectures, and testified about the effects pornography could have on men's behavior and attitudes, and, consequently, on the negative implications those attitudes carry for women and children.

> *[...] most women are unable to fully grasp the depth of the malicious acts committed against women by the pornography industry, in the name of free expression, profit, pleasure, and, of course, entertainment. Confronting the hatred and contempt for women found in pornography is, however costly, fuel for our rage, which is what leads us to commit so much incendiary activism. — Nikki Craft, quoted in Diana Russell, 1999*

Final Considerations

Nikki Craft's work is the result of individual research and action, as well as struggles, clashes, and ideological exchange with women's collectives organized around the principle of acting against the symbolic discrimination present in so many cultural representations of femininity. Faced with the countless messages produced by cultural structures — the art world, beauty institutions, the pornography industry — which legitimize representations that, within gender culture, foster misogyny-based behavior, Nikki adopted a deliberately redundant activist aesthetic, aimed at large audiences and designed to maximize the likelihood of being decoded and understood. The power and relevance of her symbolic production lie in her use of codes recognizable to the vast majority of people sharing common cultural experiences of gender. There is a clear intention to give her activist aesthetic a broadly accessible interpretation from the standpoint of cultural convention — and, in that sense, we can say that the codes and sign systems Nikki employs are integrated into common modes of perception.

Had one of her pieces, such as But Is It Art or Is It Politics? (1982), been exhibited in an art gallery instead of accompanying the Myth California demonstration in a public space, its categorization and signifying power would have changed considerably. Confining the piece to a private space like an art gallery would have meant limiting its access to educated cultural audiences and excluding it from the entire heterogeneous mass of passersby moving through public space. There is also a dual layer of meaning, and a reinforcement of purpose, between this particular piece and a demonstration like Myth California. It is worth adding that decoding this piece requires almost no mediation, because the combination of codes is so efficient that, in our view, understanding its implicit messages does not require a given audience member to possess extensive cultural capital. The same principles outlined above can be applied to many of Craft's other pieces and interventions.

Among this radical feminist's activist practices, carried out across the 1970s and 1980s, we note — beyond emotional and financial investment — certain negative personal consequences, which on several occasions resulted in prison sentences. As we have seen, there is a consistent strategic through-line: an invariable reliance on the use of public space, together with aesthetic devices that nullify and invert the original meanings and significations of cultural gender representations, with the intent of countering the subordination of symbolic production and its reproduction by women under male power.

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